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CHAS. BATTEN
M.A., F.R.G.S.

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CERTAIN RITES OF TRANSITION AND THE CONCEPTION OF INAU AMONG THE HOTTENTOTS[1]

A. W. Hoernlé

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The following notes have been put together from the materials which I collected during the years 1912 and 1913 on two expeditions made among three different tribes of Hottentots. In 1912 I visited the remnants of certain tribes of the Little Namaqua, among whom some fugitives from the tribe of Khamí-ǂaín or Bondelswarts of German South West Africa were living. It was a very scattered community on the southern bank of the Orange River, about fifty miles inland from its mouth, and in British territory.

The following year I spent among the ǂÂunin or Topnaars of Walfish Bay and among the /Hoi /Khauan, who live now in the territory round Berseba in German South West Africa. This latter tribe crossed the Orange River in the beginning of the 19th century, after its members had absorbed a great deal from the Dutch among whom they had lived, and with whom there had been a considerable amount of intermixture. As a result of the mixed blood and the adoption of many Dutch ways, the pure Hottentot customs and beliefs had been considerably modified among them. They are an offshoot from the Cowquas, who in the time of Simon Van der Stel (17th century) lived in the present Wijnenster district of the Cape Colony in the valleys of the Breede River,[2] and belong therefore to the so-called Colonial Hottentots, not to any branch of the Namaqua people with whom the other tribes I visited must be classed. It is, therefore, extremely interesting to find that all four of the transition rites (rites de passage) which I am about to describe in this paper are practised by them with but slight variations. Whether they brought these customs with them, or whether they adopted them from the tribes with which they came in contact when they crossed the Orange River in their progress northwards, it is impossible to say. The ǂÂunin, though but a miserable remnant of what was never,

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[1] In this paper I have used, as far as possible, the notation employed by J. G. Krönlein, Wortenbuch der Khoi-Khoin, Berlin, 1889. /, indicates the dental click; ǂ the palatal; ! the cerebral; // the lateral. ŋ indicates a guttural ch, the sound " under a vowel indicates that it is long; " indicates that it is nasalized. A short vowel has no special sign; ' represents the low tone of the vowel; ˉ the middle tone; ´ the high one. The sign ˘ under a vowel indicates that it is very short; while ‿ indicates that the vowel is to be separately pronounced.

[2] Cf. T. Bain, Travels in Kaffraria, London, 1888, p. 10.

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114 101 [262] perhaps, one of the largest tribes, is probably the one most satisfactory to study, for these people have been marooned for two or three centuries among the sand dunes which form their present home, attracted thither by the famous Ixiaria melon which provides them with food for many months in the year. I travelled in the country five years after the end of the German-Hottentot wars, during which great numbers of the older people perished, and the whole tribal system of the Hottentots received its death blow.

12 18 The Hottentots are now a passing people, who have practically given up the struggle of keeping alive their own traditions. What vitality is left is spent in the absorption of the ways of the incoming Europeans. One has, therefore, to be content with what remnants of their former customs and beliefs one can still gather from them. It was only by reviving long forgotten memories among the oldest of the men and women that I could gather up many of the customs of the past. One of my best informers, a woman, reproached me bitterly for encouraging her to think of things she had spent half her life in trying to forget: "You have made me live the old life once more; soon you will be going, and what shall I do then?"

[79] 115 The four transition rites which I shall describe are, however, practised even now among the people I visited, though sometimes in a simplified form owing to the great poverty which prevails. Though I have obtained details from many informants, the main contribution is that of four persons, two men and two women. It is to one of the women that I am most indebted. Hannah[1] (Auntie was, before she married among the ǂ Āmin, a member of the //Khau-ǂ Gāun tribe, where she learnt all she knew from her grandfather. The latter was headman of his tribe, and as she was his favorite, and a very clever girl, he told her all the old lore of his tribe. She became my closest friend among the Hottentots, and to her I owe the framework of my information. She is now a woman well over 60 years of age. Louisa Kabes is a somewhat younger woman, less intelligent, but very inquisitive. As a girl she used to hide where old and important people were talking, thinking that such as she were far away. She married into the family of the old Captain Piet //Khib of Walfish Bay, who was long subsidised by the Cape Government, and who was a most intelligent old man. He died some eight years before I came among the people, well over eighty years of age. Gottlieb //Āmib was the oldest of my informers, and both he and his brothers had been throughout their lives, not only because of their family connections, but because of their intelligence, the headmen of the captain of the Topnaars. Gottlieb was a splendid informer and an admirable character, but he was becoming frail, and his memory was no longer at its best. He often said he was no use, and wished I might have known information on what were for him exceedingly weighty

[1] Most Hottentots have now a "Christian" name as well as a native one.

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matters. Cornelius Goliath was chief of the Berseba Hottentots, a very capable man who had kept his people out of the war with the Germans, and had therefore been allowed to preserve his tribe and its lands intact. He spoke excellent German, and was much impressed with the necessity of absorbing as much of the incoming culture as would enable his people to be at less disadvantage in the common concerns of life. He was therefore not much use as an original contributor, but was invaluable as a check on the statements of others. During many weeks he had supper with me each evening, and spoke willingly of what he knew. 115

Common characteristics of all transition rites among the Hottentots. All periods of crisis in the lives of the Hottentots, whether of individuals or of groups, afford admirable illustrations of those rites which A. van Gennep has called "rites de passage." There is always the separation of the person from his usual surroundings, his preparation for a new group in society, and, finally, his reception into this group. A person in such a crisis acquires a characteristic unknown in the group to which he has hitherto belonged. He is no longer protected by any group solidarity, and is therefore exposed to danger on every side. He must retire from contact with other people, and /haruxa;[1] But he is also a danger to other people, and more especially to the animals and other living things on which the community depends for its livelihood. Hence his seclusion and his scrupulous abstention from his usual tasks. Such a person is said to be /haru. It is essential that he be initiated, as it were, with the least possible delay, into that group of his people which already possesses the new characteristic which he has acquired, in order that he may have a normal place in the community once more. But here there is a difficulty, for a /haru person may work untold mischief on anyone dealing with him, who might also become /haru. Therefore only persons who have passed through all the stresses and strains of human life and no longer fear anything, who are beyond good and evil, one might almost say, are qualified to deal with such cases. Some but very old men, and women past the age of childbearing, satisfy this condition. They alone can be called upon to restore the /haru person to the community. But not any old woman or old man will do. It must be one who had the same characteristic as the /haru person. Only a widowed person can safely deal with one /haru by reason /haru of wife or husband. Only one who has had a given disease and been cured of it is fit to officiate for a sufferer from that disease. Preferably somebody is selected for this task who, besides the other necessary qualifications, has had an extremely bad attack of the disease, the worse the better. 796 [783] 796 888 796

Seclusion or separation of some kind occurs in all cases, but the method of initiation, if we may call it so, varies according as the crisis is one of two kinds. In childbirth,

[1] "Take care of himself", in this special way. The word is used only in this connection, both of the individual himself and of others who, knowing they may be a source of danger to him, are considerate on his behalf.

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796 marriage, puberty, or bereavement rites, the new status has simply to be recognized, acknowledged, and the necessary steps taken to protect both the individual and society by resolving the man or the woman into the new group to which he or she now belongs. This is done by the preparation of a sacramental meal[1] in which only persons duly qualified are allowed to share. In the other group of rites, a stage preliminary to the sacramental meal is necessary. The base person has first to be identified with the new group by injecting some of the 'essence' of that group into him. This is done by making incisions in some part of his body, the part varying with the rite, and injecting a concoction of which one ingredient is invariably some of the grease and dirt scraped from the body of the officiating person. This is the practice in connexion, in the puberty ceremonies of the boys, in the reception into the rank of hunters, in the treatment of diseases which are regarded as base, etc. For diseases the injection of the essence seems almost like the administration of an antitoxin. The next stage in both groups of rites is the renunciation of all that represents the old life, after a period, more or less prolonged, of complete seclusion. The individual must be reborn. There is a special cleansing[2] of the base person's body by the individual officiating, after which a totally new set of clothing is put on. The old clothes should be used only by the officiating person or someone else of the same group, though the tendency nowadays is to keep most of them for rough use. At the same time the house is thoroughly purified, and what might be called an "expiatory" meal is eaten. For this meal but one animal is killed, and of it none but the base person and persons who can no longer become base may partake. Finally there is the careful reintroduction to all the familiar daily tasks which have been so long laid aside, and so life begins again with all the solidarity of the new group behind its new member.

783 885 Some details concerning the state of base. It has already been mentioned that there are certain people who are immune from all the dangers attending to base. This is of extreme importance, as it prevents the life of the community from being paralysed by fear of the dread consequences of tampering with an unknown and overwhelmingly great power. It might also be expected that this privileged class would have great authority in its hands, and there is every evidence that in the early days the older people in the tribe did have an exceedingly strong and important position, and this notwithstanding the well known fact that old people were exposed by the Hottentots. Even nowadays I observed that an old person keeps his power as long as he keeps his vigour and his judgment, though he is likely to have a sad life if times be hard and he is either a burden than a help to the family.

I have observed only one instance in which animals, and none in which inanimate

[1] Cf. p. 61, "killing". [2] For such a cleansing the word //amaba is used.

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things, because here without some individual or group of individuals being here. This 783
is when an animal is struck by lightning. A sheep so struck is very highly here and some 889
but the very old will touch it. They cook and eat it and make use of the skin. When [262]
one realizes that the Hottentots will eat any meat however high, and any animal even though it has died of disease, one realizes how strongly this here influence works in making them afraid to touch an animal killed by lightning.

As soon, however, as some person becomes here certain things also become here. 783
First of all the fire in the hut in which he is secluded is here. It must never be allowed to go out, nor must the ashes be removed until the day comes for the purification of the house and the renewal of the fire. During all this time nothing must be cooked at the fire, and no one who might increase the peril in which the here person finds himself must come near it. Thus pregnant or menstruating women are always excluded. All these precautions seem to show that it is the patient's safety that is bound up with the fire. The here fire must be respected, not because other people may suffer from the breach of the regulations, but because the patient will suffer therefrom. In this connection it may be noted that the Hottentot hut is peculiarly private and can be used as a sanctuary. The hearth is therefore most intimately bound up with the inmates of the hut.

Raw meat and cold water are sources of great danger to a here person, and must be 783
kept away from him. All my informants denied that water ever became here, but every 778
here person has to be carefully protected from it, and reintroduced to it with much ceremony once the period of seclusion is over. I have a good many facts which show that water is endowed with a peculiar potency by the Hottentots, which is perhaps not wonderful if one considers how valuable a thing it is in their extremely arid country. One instance may suffice to show its powers. The Hottentot witch doctor, or ǂgâi-khoa, never touches [791]
cold water, and never washes from year's end to year's end. His power resides, as it were, in the dirt which clings to his body, and this is always an ingredient in any medicine he gives. Should he touch water this power would be diminished, and complete immersion in water would cause the disappearance of all his potency. The chief Christian Goliath gave me an account of such a happening at Berseba in the time of his grandfather, when [281]
a ǂgâi-khoa who had been using his power for evil was ducked in the pond by the chief's orders, and pushed under again as his head appeared above water. Thereafter his evil powers were gone.

The clothing and utensils of the patient also become here, but these are a source of 783
danger to others than himself. Their's is the peril if they inadvertently make use of them before he finally discards them and gives them to the person taking care of him. An instance was given me of a woman who brought her husband to death's door by striking him with her ǂgâi, or petticoat, when she was here.

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776 **The rites themselves.** As representative of various kinds of transition rites I have chosen the four which are still practised today with something of the detail and care of
[[776]] the past, though one needs to be but a little while among the Hottentots to learn that all the old sanctions and controls are breaking down with increasing rapidity as the years go by. I found it extremely difficult to get trustworthy information about the puberty ceremonies of the boys, which seem completely to have lapsed since big game hunting ceased to be possible, and with it the necessary test of manly prowess which it offered. But (a) the puberty ceremonies of the girls will probably be retained as long as the Hottentots themselves remain, and of these I obtained full descriptions from young girls, women, and men. (b) The remarriage ceremony is likewise carefully observed, as it is regarded as an essential protection against disease. (c) The rites are still practised for certain diseases, even though Dutch and other remedies may be tried as well, and (d) finally the death ceremonies are still carried out, for they do not tend to clash with incoming customs.

881 **Puberty ceremonies among women.** In order to make my picture of this Hottentot custom as full as possible, I shall here and there insert information from other investigators, but shall always indicate any information not of my own collecting.

A girl's first period is called *khaxé* or */kobob*. Young girls told me they were exceedingly frightened by their first period, and older women reported that girls generally start crying when they realise what has happened, and tell either their girl friends or some older woman of the clan, often the father's eldest brother's wife. Through this intermediary the mother is told. The latter gets her married sisters and her brothers' wives to make a little mat enclosure (*khaxé ǂoes*), inside at the back of the family hut, on the left hand side. It is a screened off segment, measuring 2 to 3 feet at its widest point, in the least regarded part of the hut.[1] According to !Aunin, it always has its own little opening leading out behind the hut. Unfortunately I never saw one of the *khaxé ǂoes* myself, but I had a model made for me, and the whole proceeding enacted. While the hut is being got ready, the mother goes to fetch a woman, who, through past childbearing now, has been renowned for her former fertility. This woman takes the girl on her back, carries her into the *khaxé ǂoes*, and cares for her while she is there. She is called the *ubi tarin*.[2] Should the period come on in the veldt far from home, the girl's companions will on no account let her walk, but will do their best to carry her home on their backs, taking turn and turn about. Were such a girl to walk home through the veldt, all the roots and the berries would scorch up. Once in the *khaxé ǂoes* the girl is seated on her skin blanket (*ǂgoibi*) and closely wrapped about with her *ǂgabeos*.[3] The wind must on no account blow on her,

[1] G. F. Galton, in *Globus*, vol. 12, 1867, p. 307.

[2] Also, "to carry a child on one's back". Perhaps, dignified word for "woman".

[3] "Cloak of skins".

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neither must she speak above a whisper. All informers lay great emphasis on these two 88|
points. !Amatin declares that if she talks she will be a chatterbox and meddle in all sorts
of affairs later on and will get a bad name among the people. The girl must not leave the
hut except at night, and then it must be by the back opening with one woman behind and
one in front of her, so screen her from view.

Nowadays her older girl friends visit her, but I am inclined to think that in the old 88|
days this would not have been allowed. They help her to grind sweet smelling bark or 302
root or leaves to make powder (*ǂâp*) which is freely used on the clothes and to rub on the
skin. The Hottentots have a great variety of scented powders, each with its own name,
and in olden days some of the rarer ones were greatly sought after and exchanged for a
considerable amount. When I went inland from Walfish Bay, I was entreated to send [304]
back a special sweet smelling resin which could be had from the people I was going among.
These scented powders are used constantly, and a woman spends a considerable amount
of her time grinding them. *!Noep*, a face paint made by grinding a soft red stone to
powder and mixing it with fat, is used by the girls to paint patterns on their faces. The [304]
time during which the girl must remain in the *khaŕi ǂnas* has been differently reported
to me. It varies from 2 or 3 days to a month. Hottentots are vague about length of
time, but several girls who had been through the experience recently, told me they were in
the hut a fortnight. Most probably the time was longer in days gone by, for one of the
chief things required of a girl in the hut is that she should get fat, with smoothly shining
skin. "The girl mustn't be hungry while she is sitting in the hut," says !Amatin. Indeed,
immediately she is in the hut, her relatives kill for her, the feast being called *khaŕi ǂâp*.
All her nearer relatives take part in this killing, even the girl's older married brothers if
she has any. Everything killed must be female, and *chief* of all must be a heifer. The
entrails, pluck, etc., must not on any account be eaten by any relative, either maternal
or paternal, of the girl — the visiting friends enjoy them.

This *khaŕi ǂâp* is the great feast for the women, all who have already passed
through these ceremonies being able to take part in it. No man or boy is allowed
to have any share in it at all. One woman of the Bondei tribe said to me: "That killing
is as great as the marriage killing." Nowadays the Hottentots are exceedingly poor,
and cannot afford to kill recklessly as they did of old, hence the men, who formerly took
part only in the feast of rejoicing[2] to be described below, are allowed to share the meat of
all but one of the first animals killed, and this concession is made use of to force the boys
to submit to a part of the proceedings[2] to which they would not nowadays be willing
to submit otherwise. The only exceptions to this rule that all grown women may partake [84]
of the meat are that no menstruating woman must eat of it, "lest the girl's period never 84]

[2] Vide infra, p. 72, and n. 88. [2] Vide infra, p. 72.

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881 [841] [843] stop," as Katrina says, and no pregnant woman, "lest the girl's period stop never to return." The women cook and eat the meat outside the hut, while the aké tarée takes her share, which must always be part of the outer flesh, inside. While the girl and her friends sit in the kharé ôms, drinking plenty of milk and eating all the meat they can, the fire which is always made in the centre line of the hut, just a little way inside the door, is haw and nothing must be cooked at this fire at all. Everyone must ǂkawain for the [799] girl. Thus no pregnant or menstruating woman must come and sit by the fire, nor must a sterile woman, lest dire things befall the girl in the kharé ôms. All this time too, she will be careful not to touch cold water on any pretense whatever. No man or boy would come near her for fear of dread consequences to himself.

881 [835] As the time of the girl's seclusion draws to a close, the feasting takes on bigger proportions, regulated always of course by the relatives. The young people of the village begin practising the reed dance, and the girl's friends, both male and female, play and dance round the hut in which she is confined. Then, at last, the day before she is to come out, a long series of purification rites take place.

881 First, during the day, the girl is placed in front of the haw fire, and is cleansed[8] with moist cow dung (ǂhoep) and hoep from head to foot by the old woman who carried her into the hut, to clean off all the ǂgas /uǂip.[9] The aké tarée smears the ǂhoep all over the body of the girl, allows it to dry slightly, and then with the palm of her hand rolls it off in handfuls, ǂhoep and /uǂip, for the Hottentots allow plenty of it to gather. She then collects it carefully and hides it in an ant hoep or animal's hole when no one is looking. The girl is then given a complete new set of clothing and the old woman carries off the old one. Meantime a ewe has been slaughtered, and one of the hind legs is given to the aké tarée. This she must now cook on the fire in the house, the first cooking done there since the girl entered the kharé ôms. When the meat is cooked, it is eaten by the aké tarée and other women who, like her, are past childbearing. No one else touches it. Then the aké tarée takes the fire, ashes and all, and dumps it far from the house. She then sprinkles fresh sand on the hearth and lays a new fire. This fire must not be lit from [372] another fire, as is usually done when a fire goes out. It must be lit with flint. Most Hottentots use tinder boxes nowadays, matches being a rare luxury. No doubt originally the fire was lighted with the firesticks which were certainly in use among them.[10] The fire thus lit is now no longer haw. *Nanuhi* ôman ke ǂnâa[9], ǂnâe tari nai ni ǂnaya ("now the

[8] //ân ǂnâman, "the cleansing before going out".

[9] Literally "hay dirt".

[10] Cf. T. Hahn, Tsuni-//Goam, p. 77.

[9] ǂnâa, "haw" or "right", e.g., ǂnâa ǂnâre "the right path".

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house is free so that anyone can come in"). The girl is now ready to receive visits as an [851]
ǂaysis, that is, a young marriageable woman. All her relatives and friends pour in, [491]
each one with some present of beads, or earrings, or other finery. A great deal of this is
loaned only and is returned later. The girl shines with clean, well-greased skin. She [302]
is anointed all over with the oap which she and her girl friends have ground. Her face is
painted in curious patterns with !naop and /gunub ("ground white stone"), and her
body is loaded with her presents. Then it is that the little boys, even up to sixteen years
and more,[a] come into the hut from which they have up to now been excluded, and go in
to the newly made ǂaysis. She takes her !khwe doa ("powder puff") full of oap and rubs
their testicles (ǂkhwiis). This ensures fertility and is a protection against sexual diseases. [842.
The full expression for this custom is !khwe doa /o /naro ("to rub gently with a powder 751]
puff"). Nowadays the saying is that until the boys have been rubbed, it is too dangerous
for them to eat any of the meat prepared for the girl, and the younger ones especially go
eagerly in, so that they may join in the feast. Some of the youths, according to Hannah,
prefer to go without the meat, and none of my witnesses had ever seen grown-up men take
part. It looks as though the custom were gradually dying out.

The feasting reaches its climax on this day. Female animals, both ewes and heifers, [231
are killed, cooked, and eaten. It is interesting to note that the goat is never used in these 17]
ceremonial meals, if it can possibly be avoided. This is probably due to the fact that
originally the Hottentots owned no grain, and only acquired them quite late from the
Bantu tribes with whom they came in contact.

Towards evening the girl's friends enter the hut to fetch her out. She must leave the [851
hut by the special door which has been made for her at the back.[b] Her friends surround 535
her, and for a time try to keep her from the view of the youths, for she is very shy. The
youths start the round dance, and the girls dance round them with the ǂaysis in their
midst. Gradually the youths get to the side of the girl and choose her as a partner, and in
the end her shyness gives way. In these Hottentot dances the men form the inner ring,
the women the outer one, and every now and then there is a change of partners somewhat
like the English game of *Jolly Miller*. During the dancing the ǂaysis throws oap over the
men and boys as she sees them. This is supposed to bring good luck. The dancing lasts
often right through the night, and when it is over, the final round of rites begins, reintro-
ducing the girl to her daily tasks, freeing her, as it were, from the spell under which she
has been living.

The old Nama must accompany the ǂaysis in all these rites, but often her friends go [851

[a] According to T. Hahn, in olden days, all but extremely old men took part in this ceremony. Cf. also L. [171]
Schultze, Aus Namaland und Kalahari, Jena, 1907, p. 500.

[b] A ǂaysis is also taken out by a special door made for the purpose at the back of the hut.

881 with her too. First a visit is paid to the cattle kraal where dip is strewn on all the male animals, also on the trees and bushes which they pass by. This was great luck, said one old man to me, and the day after such a girl had come out of her hut it was sure to rain and there would be plenty in the land; "now the white men have come, the rain has ceased, and the people are miserable." Then a cow is milked with the help of the old woman. If possible this is a young cow calving for the first time. The old woman supports the girl's arm while she milks. This milk is !nas, to be drunk only by the old woman herself or others of her age. Once this milking has taken place, the girl can resume her milking duties with impunity. Next a visit is made to the spring. The girl carries her water pot, (//ho-ôs) on her head. Arrived at the spring, the woman with a branch from a tree strikes the water, scattering it over the girl. She then rubs the girl's legs and arms with clay (≠gaiti), fills the pot, and places it on the girl's head. The girl is then free to draw water as she pleases.

Hahn [1] states that when the relatives appear for the last at the end of the seclusion, her nearest male relative (usually the eldest unmarried cousin) takes the fat of the heifer which has been killed, hangs it over her head, and wishes that she may be as fruitful as a young cow and have many children. The other friends repeat the wish. Further,"
[882] the girls who have come of age must after the festival run about in the first thunderstorm quite naked, so that the rain pours down and washes the whole body. The belief is that this causes them to be fruitful and have many children. He says he has on three occasions witnessed this running in the thunder rain when the roaring of the thunder was deafening and the whole sky appeared to be one continual flash of lightning.

881 When men are giving an account of this puberty ceremony for women, the chief
783 thing they lay stress on is the !nas dôp, i. e., the milk obtained from the first milking by the girl who has just come out of the khaiti !nas. Indeed, it was in this context that I first lit on the word !nas and all it means. Gottlieb had been describing the ceremony from his point of view, and when he mentioned the !nas dôp and the serious consequences which would follow if any man were inadvertently to drink it, I asked him what !nas meant and he burst out: "What is absent from this !nas? Everything is !nas, or used to be; warriors returning from a battle were !nas, a sick man is !nas, a widow," etc. etc.

783 Should anyone infringe any of the !nas injunctions during these puberty rites, some sort of mental disease would beset him, and this could only be prevented from proving fatal, if he were able to persuade the old lords to intercede and so free him. The method of this intercession, which is much the same whenever it occurs, will be fully described in the next section.

[1] T. Hahn, loc. cit. [2] H. Vedder, Das Volk der Nama, p. 87.

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Marriage ceremonies. So far as I could discover there are no less ceremonies 587
connected with the marriage of two people who marry for the first time. But should a widower marry a young woman, or a widow a young man, or even a widow a widower, great precautions are necessary, and the full influence of !nau can be seen at work.

Should a widower be marrying a young girl, a special animal, if possible a sheep, otherwise a goat, is killed for the remarriage feast.* This is a special ceremony following upon the regular marriage feast.* The bride and bridegroom enter the new hut which has been built for them, seat themselves on a skin on the fire and await proceedings. The fire has become !nau now, and the two people themselves are !nau, and in an extremely precarious condition. Great !nau might easily come to them, so that the people of their clan !kawain for them, and see to it that no one dangerous enters the hut. Still !nau would may one who had not undergone the ceremony himself dare to intrude there.

The special animal which has been slaughtered is brought into the hut and skinned there. No portion of it must leave the hut. A deep hole is made near the fire and into this the contents of the stomach and the small intestines* are thrown. The hole is then filled up and must not be interfered with. Any blood that may be spilled during the skinning, must also drop into the hole. Meantime the old woman* who is to do the operation on the couple is in attendance, and must herself be a widow who has been re-married and is now long past childbearing. Further she must not be a relative of the couple. The skin of the animal is given to this old woman for her own use; no one else would dare to use it. Once skinned, the animal is cut up in such a way as to leave the pelvic bones intact, as they are to be made use of later. Every scrap of the animal is then cooked, the heart, liver, and other internal organs together with the blood in one pot, the flesh in one or more other pots. While the meat is cooking the actual ceremony takes place. The old woman takes a knife* and cuts both husband and wife first in front, [304]
two large gashes in the groin, one on each side, and afterwards behind, two gashes in the sacral region. With a small horn blood is cupped from these cuts, mixed together, and some of the blood of the slaughtered animal is added. Next the old woman scrapes some dirt from her arm and mixes it in with the blood. Finally the mixture is rubbed into all the cuts and the two people are bumped together so that their blood mingles.* They are then considered as duly initiated into the realm of the twice-wed.

* Also ‘strike’ ob.
* Ob.-ob.
* Hoerdi, “intestinal contents”.
* The ceremony may be performed equally well by an old man.
* Formerly it was always a sharp piece of quartz, !garib, which was used at this and similar occasions.
* Ob.-ha, lit. “to throw the blood”.

587 After the ceremony, the guests coming to greet the couple, give them beads or bracelets, or other similar small gifts. These presents are called *do oin*."

[709] The meat of the *lgio oblim oǂo* is now ready, and may be eaten by anyone who has undergone a similar ceremony, except that pregnant women, menstruating women, and their husbands, may not come to the house where any cutting has been done, otherwise its efficacy is lost. If any unqualified person were to eat of this meat he would die. The newly married couple may eat only of the flesh, not of the plank.

Until the wounds are healed, and the two persons can be //ãn, they remain here, and may touch neither water, nor the pots, nor go among the animals. The old woman remains to cook for them outside the hut. She herself must eat the flesh of the //oe ("pubis") and when the bones are quite clean and bare, she ties them together and hangs them up in the rafters of the hut above the fire, where they may get the smoke. According to some informers, they are left there so long as the hut stands; according to others, they are removed later when the fire is renewed, and thrust into the hide of some animal.

When the cuts have healed, the man and wife are cleaned by the old woman in a manner similar to that in which the young girl was cleaned.[2] A complete change of clothing must be made, and the old woman alone is at liberty to use the old sets. Finally the animal's tail is taken, threaded on a //aoib ("sinew") which has been saved from the animal, together with the knuckle bone (*tobyoie*) of a hind leg. The whole is tied round the woman's waist. It either remains there until it falls off of itself, or it is taken off after it has become black, and buried with the pubic bones in an animal's hole.

Next the couple must be reintroduced to the ordinary tasks of life. The woman is helped to milk just as the young girl was.[2] She is taken to the water in a similar way, and she must be reintroduced to cooking. Some meat is cooked on the fire, which has not been used for cooking since the day of the ceremony. The old woman supports the bride's arm while she stirs the contents of the pot, and finally helps her to lift the pot from the fire. She then removes the fire and lights a fresh one just as was done for the ǂnaxin. When the bride first goes to gather wood, the old woman goes in front of her, striking the ground as she goes with a thorny branch, "to protect the bride from being pricked with thorns." The first pieces of wood gathered must be given to the old woman. Then at last all is well.

The man has to be reintroduced to the cattle kraal as well as to cold water. The night before this ceremony some branches of the shrub "tamarisk," and the //gnaub[a] tree are soaked in water. This water is taken next morning and with it the cattle and

[a] Lit. "throw to the sun".

[b] Called the Dawn Ceremony by the Dutch.

[2] [See calc. 84, p. 72 — Analyst]

[2] [See calc. 84, p. 79 — Analyst]

sheep are sprinkled. After that the man is free to go about his duties [words illegible] go, "you are clean" the people say of a person thus freed from the influence of tsaru.*

That the Hottentots attach great importance to these ceremonies may be judged from the care with which they still perform them. I made inquiries among people who had been married more than once, and found that in almost every instance the operation had been performed. One old man, /Aridi, had been operated upon three times and had himself performed the operation many times. One instance was cited to me of a woman inland from Walfish Bay who was dying as a result of neglecting to carry out these ceremonies. I went to see her, and certainly she was a terribly spectacle. She was eaten up with disease and died soon after. I failed to enquire how long she had been ill.

Great care is taken to conceal these customs from the white man, and in Bersaba the people professed great indignation at first when they found I knew about the ceremony. "Is that a thing we discuss with white people?" one old woman said. I had been told of the ceremony soon after my arrival in Walfish Bay by an English woman who had been born and brought up among the Hottentots, had a genuine interest in them, and so had their confidence. I should mention here that I have no record of this ceremony among the Hottentots south of the Orange river, and do not know whether they have the custom or not.

Treatment of certain diseases. Schultze** has given an admirable account of the Hottentot methods of treating sickness and disease, and has described in detail the surgical methods used in dressing wounds, cupping a patient, etc., but he makes no mention of the ceremonies attaching to some cures or attempted cures. It is this side of the subject which I wish to describe here. Roughly, one might say, all maladies are divided by the Hottentots into two groups. (a) First there is /Aigwa, "sickness" which they regard as due to some misplacement of the internal organs. According to their notions of anatomy these organs have weird ways of wandering about the body. The treatment is massage, to restore each organ to its proper place. In such massage the Hottentots are very highly skilled. (b) The other group of diseases is called by the same name as death, //ãe, and it is chiefly for this group that the procedure now to be described is used, though I do not wish to imply that the distinction is clear in the minds of the Hottentots, or that the two methods of treatment cannot be used together. Indeed, for paralysis, a very frequent disease, especially among young children, both methods are always used. A great variety of roots and herbs is employed in the treatment of this second group. Some of the herbs are considered so valuable that journeys are made from tribe to tribe to get them, though

* The herbs used as medicine and for medicinal purposes, as here, often from tribe to tribe. The date and the //gheib are used by the ordinary.

** L. Schultze, Aus Namaland und Kalahari, p. 351 sqq.

753 among the herbs which are to be found in any particular territory are always some
757 which may serve as substitutes. But however powerful the remedy may be, if it is to be effective, it must always be applied by someone who has had the disease and been cured of it. The most effective medicine will fail unless used by the right person.

763 The chief diseases described to me as requiring this treatment are //eaba, "paraly-
755 sis", //ibis, "fever", //ǂaeb, "various veins", and //aeseb, a disease called lupus by my
757 interpreter, which I suspect is cancer. Whether in the old days people with some of these
164 dread diseases were effectively isolated, I do not know, though the Hottentots describe some of them as //ǂi, //ǂi, "contagious diseases". Certain it is that today, especially in Walfish Bay, the people are eaten up with these diseases, though inland they appear to be less prevalent. The treatment, when carried out, is exactly similar to that described in the miscarriage ceremony, except that there is one important point on which I find my information fails me. I cannot say definitely that the "sacramental" meat takes place on these occasions. In one record it is stated that when various veins are being treated, the bicycle of the goat killed is strung on a stave together with the tail of the animal and tied round the ankle of the sufferer, just as in the miscarriage ceremony it was tied round the woman's waist. But whether the goat is eaten in company, I do not know. I regret that my information is not unequivocal on this point.

755 Otherwise the statements are clear enough. Gottlieb says, "when a man is sick
757 (//ǂa) he is lean, and must look after himself. He mustn't touch anyone with his hands, he mustn't touch cold water or the pots. When the roots which have been made to inject medicine are healed (/ari), then the person who cut him must clean him with fat and milk mixed with ewe-dung; then he is taken to the well and has clay rubbed on his legs. He has also to take off all his old clothes, and give them to the one who cuts him. Then they say 'he/she let go'; 'you are clean.'"

/Ariab said, "Paralysis is cured by cutting and putting in the dirt of one who has already had it. It is no simple task to undertake to cure anyone, for if anything goes wrong the people are sure to think something has been omitted or not done right." He spoke feelingly after much experience. Other informants mention ingredients which are mixed with the dirt, the chief of these being //eaba kûip, "paralysis stick", the ground bark of a little plant.

Hannah Amasis had an adopted son, a boy of about eighteen, who had the disease called hamsis (lupus). She was most disheartened about him. She had had him cut four times by different people, on either side of the nose and in the nape of the neck, and had had herbs, together with the grease of these parrots, rubbed in. All of these had had bands and been cured, according to Hannah. When I saw the boy, he had just come from his last treatment, which had taken place some distance inland. He looked very ill.

Some of customs and the ceremonies of this nature are different 70

Ilmavalö said some of the people who had treated him so far had had the disease badly 755
enough, hence all the attempted cures had failed. It is interesting to note here that this 757
feared folly has to be treated with great deference. It is the root, which is astringent, (somewhat like ginger), which is used. When a person comes to the bush, before digging [124]
he must put down a bracelet, or a bead, or some little thing. If he fails to do so, the root will simply disappear. Later, if he divides it among his friends, the same process takes place; each must give some little thing for the piece received. I was warned to do the same when I received a piece but all the virtue leave the root, even if it did not itself wholly disappear.

However it may be with the "sacramental" meal, the purification meal certainly takes 785
place when the fire is cleared away and renewed. The reintroduction to the duties of life also takes place in the usual manner.

Peter Kolben, writing at the beginning of the 18th century, states that "If a Hottentot, man or woman, recovers of a dangerous sickness, 'undermasken' is performed by killing, for the entertainment of the kraal, a head of great or small cattle, according to the circumstances of the family"*. This may be a feast similar to the one in which all partake when the Zayein leaves her kloof hut.

The purification of the survivors after a death. The wives of slain connected with 768
death have perhaps undergone more disintegration than any of the others described. They have been submerged, as it were, into one another, so that often enough as many of them as remain are all carried out on the same day, after the burial is over. The old writers, of whom Kolben is the earliest and the most detailed on this point, state quite definitely that the hut of a deceased person was left standing with all the belongings, and that the camp or kraal was moved. My informants state that in the earlier days of their confinement the hut was always moved to some other part of the camp, whereas nowadays the hut as a rule is not moved at all. Several deaths occurred while I was at Wallich Bay, and one while I was in Damaba, and in none of these cases was the hut moved. Yet 764
where an animal is to be had the feast takes place, and in any case the cleansing is done even now. After a death not only the immediate relatives are affected, but also the larger family circle, and there are interesting things to note in each case. If it is a husband who has died, the wife becomes bare, but his relatives, brothers, sisters, parents, have also to perform certain rites before the ceremonial meal, and to a lesser degree all members of the kraal who take part in the proceedings. It will be as well to describe these preliminaries before attending to the widow.

When the people come back from the grave, they all wash their hands in cold water

* Kolben's Hottentots. A translation from the High German by Medley? London, 1738, p. 105. (The High German version is itself a translation of P. Kolbe, Caput Bonae Spei hodiernum, Norimberga, 1719).

which is placed in front of the dead man's house. In the old days they wailed and
[177] wailed in lamentation. Nowadays they sing hymns. In Berseba where a man died late in the afternoon, hymns were sung right through the night and all the morning until the burial by the missionary took place. Meantime the man's relatives slaughter animals according to their means, and collect the blood separately into one or more pots. The animals are collected in other pots, and the meat in yet others; all the different families
[278] who are taking part providing pots. The blood is heated to boiling point, and the herb called //gûnab is mixed in with it. A chopper, /ûp, which has been heated red hot in
[442] the stirred round in it to make the steam rise. The immediate relatives of the man*— men, women, and children — collect round the pots and cover their heads with their skins
[283] so that they perspire (soaqe). Then an old man, who is related neither to the man nor to the women, takes potsherds and makes a line on the stomach of each person — "to prevent their getting pains from eating the food", says Ikxaxûn. The cleaning is done in the dead person's hut, and so is the putting on of the black line and the eating. The relatives eat only of the flesh, other members of the kraal eating the entrails, while the blood can be used only by the officiating person and others of like age. In Berseba I was told that the line on the stomach was made with the blood, not with the potsherd. Some informers say the cleaning is done in the hut, others say outside. Unfortunately in the cases which I witnessed myself the people were too badly off to have meat at all, and there was simply
[543] coffee drinking. The widow takes no part in these rites at all. "She doesn't belong to the man's family", one informant said indignantly when I asked.

748 How long the widow remained here, I do not know. One informant says, "Even to this day, after the death of a husband, or child, a woman won't use cold water for a few days". But the cleansing is often done immediately after the burial. Formerly, according to Gottlieb and others, it was done sometime after the burial when the hut had been rebuilt in another spot. Other remarks show that even now some time may elapse between the burial and the cleansing, for another informant tells me that if a widow were obliged
[749] for some reason to go from the shore in Walfish Bay to an inland settlement, she would on no account take the path through the valuable karee plants, but would go by the desert path where no vegetation of any sort is to be found.

During the interval, whether it be long or short, the widow must not touch uncooked meat or cold water, go among the cattle, or handle the pots. She is tended by one or more elderly widows, not relatives of either man or wife, who take her through the
[278] purification rites when the time comes. First she is cleaned from head to foot with sheep or, on the Orange River, with a lotion made from a species of euphorbia, or, in Walfish

* None of the woman's relatives take part in the ceremony.

Day, where there are no cattle nowadays, with ground horse pips, goats' dung, and fat. 768
Next, her whole body is rubbed with soap, and the hair is cut from the top of her head. [278]
In cutting off a bit of her hair, they spit on the end of it and say, "The next husband you get must be a lucky one, and get him quickly." The woman also puts on a complete set of new clothes.

All this time there is a pot on the fire in the hut with a small piece of meat in it which [280 2]
the old woman has fetched from the cooking pots. She takes some of the black from this pot, and puts a mark under each eye, "so that everything the widow meets may be nice to her", and also on the chest, "so that her food may go down nicely". The meat in the pot is eaten by the old woman. The hair which was cut off is mixed with the ash of the fire, and the whole is then removed from the hut and a fresh fire made. The next morning the widow will take the /drup, "contents of the animal's stomach", and, together with the old woman, who goes in front, will scatter them over the cattle kraals saying, "dollo /ahe", "let there be plenty of milk". There follows the milking of a cow, the reintroduction to water, the fetching of wood, just as in the case of the ǂaysin.[1] The water ceremony was described to me as follows by Kabes. First the old woman sprinkles the widow with water saying "Xarí dama kaure ǂaba ǂaharo", "don't get thin, get fat like the ǂaba onion". Then they go together to the spring, where the old woman takes a stick, beats the water, and scatters it on the widow. She also dips her hand in the water, and sprinkles the widow's face and her whole body. Finally she puts clay on her legs saying again, "Xarí dama kaure ǂaba ǂaharo", and, filling the water pot, //ho-ts, she puts it on the widow's head. Then they go home.

If it is a woman who has died, the treatment of the husband is much the same, but 768
Gottlieb gave me a few additional details. After the husband has been cleansed, two 642
cuts are made on his forehead, and //ubus* juice is rubbed in. In the old days, as men- [279]
tioned above, the cut was made with the //gurie, a new piece being broken off for each occasion. The widower's hair is cut from the back of the head, also with the //gurie. Before he has been cleansed in this way he must not leave the hut. After the hut has been cleansed, some dabi and //ghnab tree branches are soaked in water over night. Next morning the widower and his attendant go out among the cattle and sheep, and sprinkle them with this water.

When a child has died, both parents become taus, and have to be dealt with similarly. 768

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I am fully aware how incomplete and indefinite these notes are in many details. It may well be that there is still some chance of filling in the gaps, especially for some

* A small shrub with astringent leaves.

[1] [ie. A young marriageable woman. See cat. 116, pp. 72 ff. -Analyst]

observer who could go among the people in a time of plenty, and in an isolated spot where their memory would be freshest and the old time would be most likely to be recalled. Nothing would please me better than to be among them at such a time, when perhaps one might have the good fortune to record some recollections before those who treasure them pass away forever.